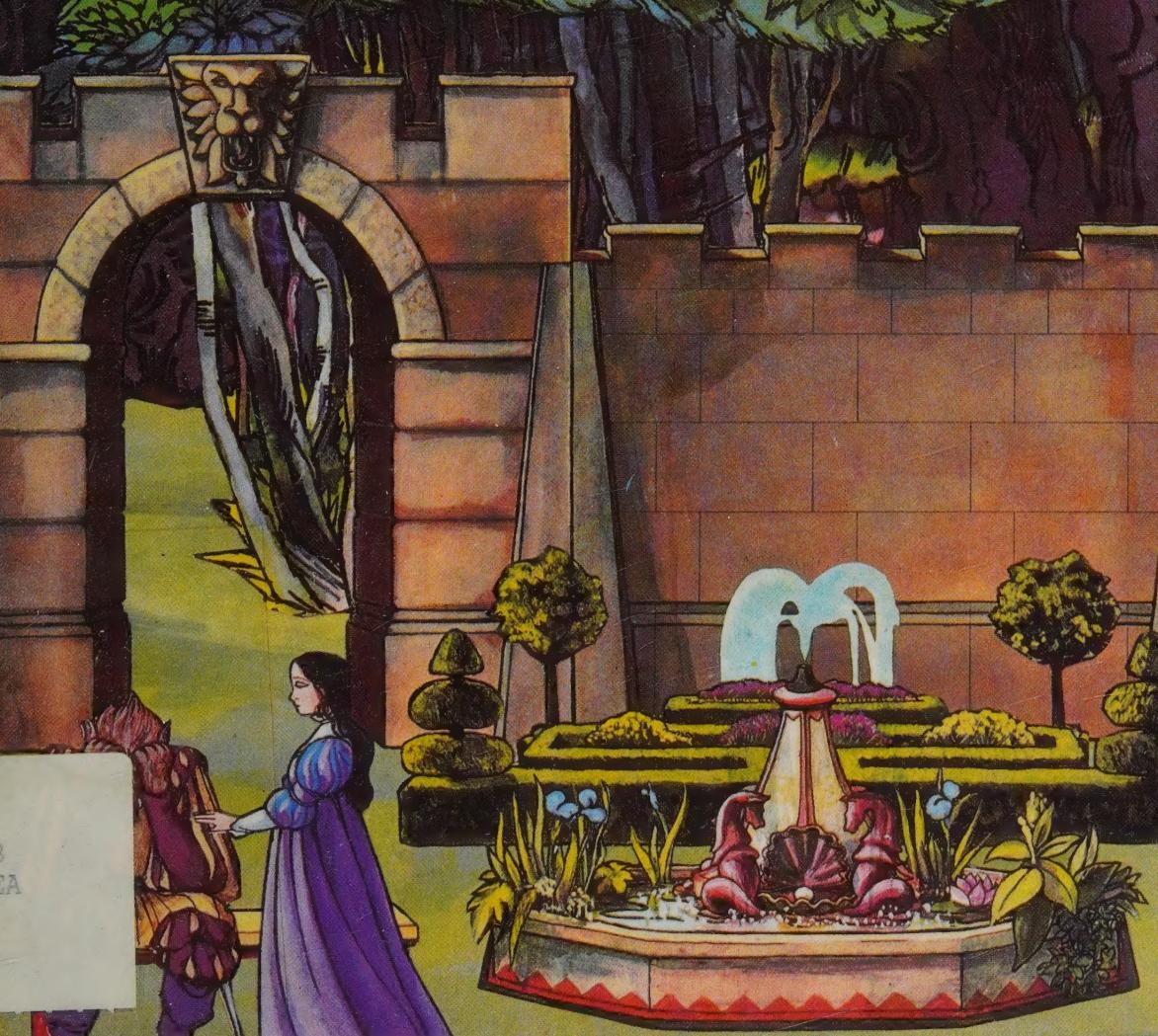


Beauty and the Beast



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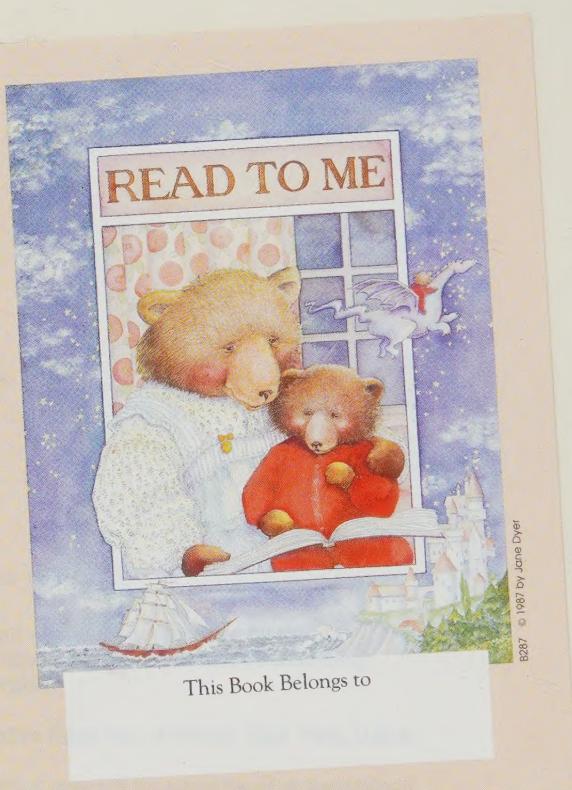
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Beauty and the Beast



Once upon a time, a rich merchant lived in a big house with his three daughters. Bad luck came to this man, however, and he lost all of his fortune.

While all of his daughters were beautiful, two of them were vain and hated the thought of not having any more money for new clothes. They complained and were very unhappy.

The youngest, however, who was known as 'The Little Beauty', tried to make the best of things and took good care of her father without complaint.





One day, the merchant received a letter from a man who owed him money. The letter said the money would arrive soon, on a ship.



When he told his daughters the news, the two older girls begged him to buy them new dresses and ribbons for their hair. Their father said, "And what shall I bring back for you, Beauty?"



Beauty was afraid that after buying the dresses, her father would have no money left, so she simply asked for a single rose.



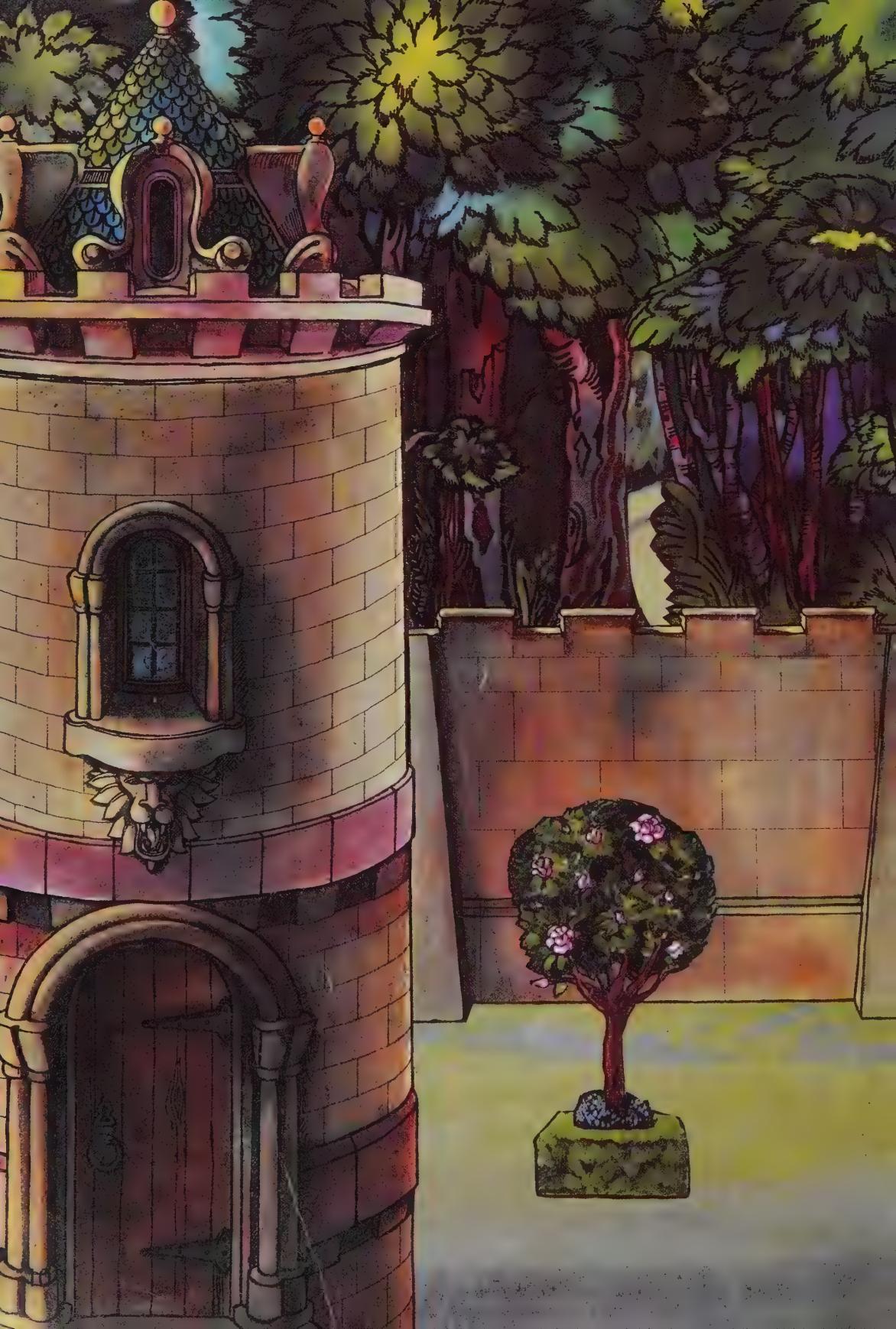
The merchant rode off to meet the ship.



When he arrived, he was told that the ship had been lost at sea. He would be getting no money. He started home sadly, thinking about the gifts he could not buy his daughters, instead of watching the path.

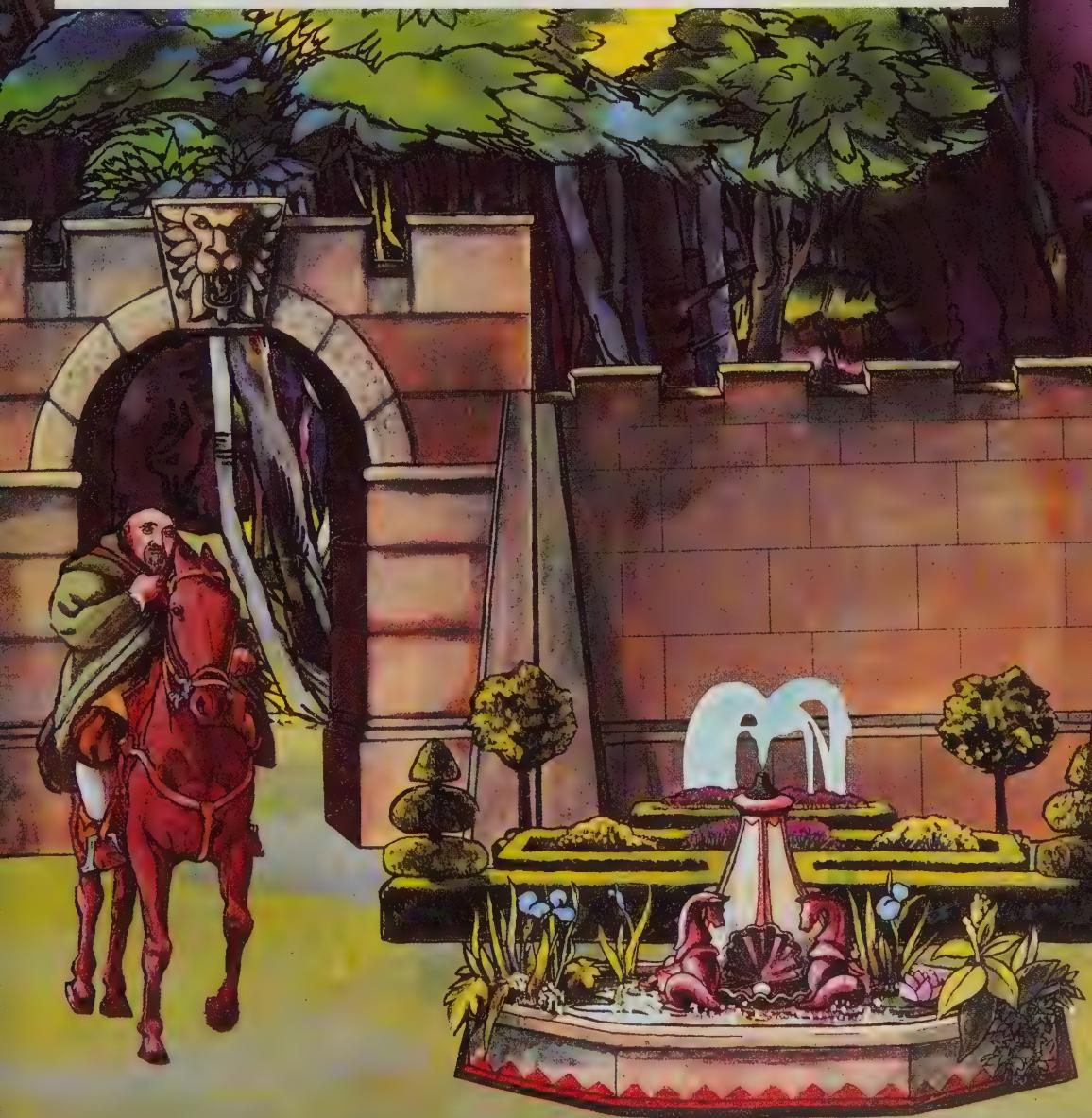


Soon he was lost in a thick forest. As it got dark, the wind howled and it began to rain. Luckily, the merchant saw a light in the distance.



He discovered that the light was coming from a huge, illuminated palace. He was relieved, for he was getting cold, tired, and hungry. He rode through the gate and into the courtyard.

He looked around, but could find no one.





There was a table set with a fine feast. The merchant was very hungry, but he waited and waited for the master of the palace to arrive.

Finally, he could wait no longer. After eating and drinking, he felt much better. Since the weather was not improving, he decided to stay the night.

The next morning, he found breakfast waiting for him.

Again, he looked around for the master of the palace, and, since no one was in sight, he said "Thank you" silently and sat down to eat.

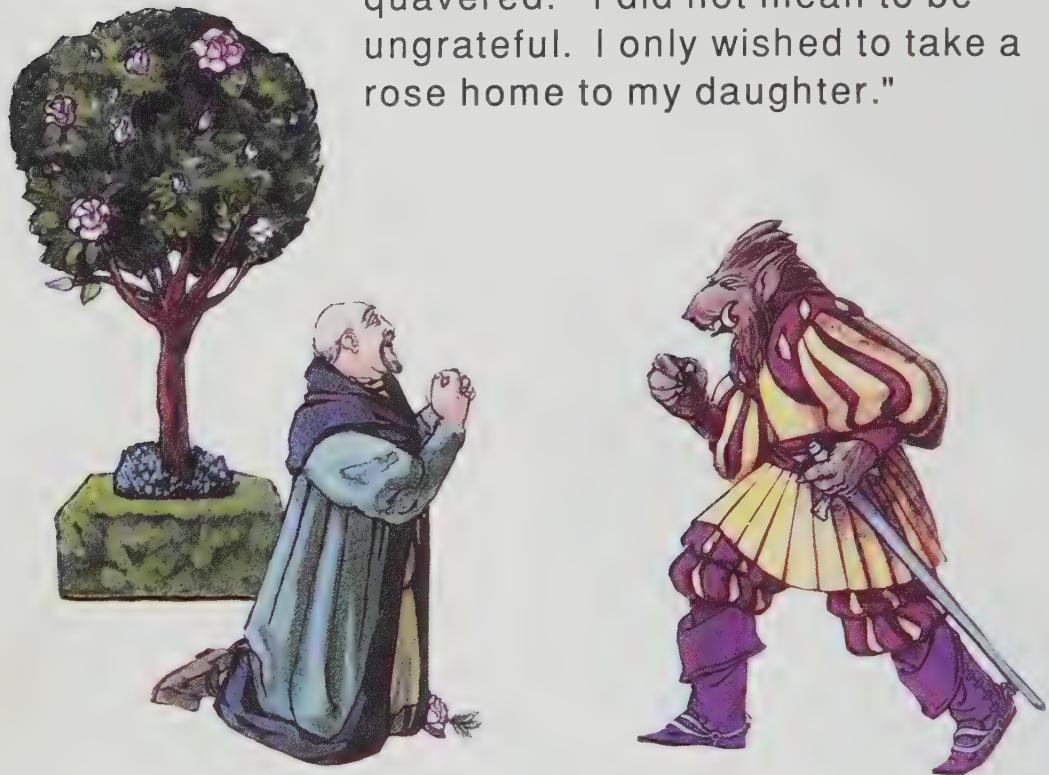


As he was leaving, he saw a red rose bush. He remembered Beauty's request, and plucked a rose from the bush. Suddenly, a horrible Beast came bellowing into the courtyard.

"How dare you steal one of my precious roses! Is this how you repay me for giving you food, drink, and shelter?"

The merchant was so fearful of this ugly monster that he fell to his knees.

"Please forgive me, Master," he quavered. "I did not mean to be ungrateful. I only wished to take a rose home to my daughter."



"Get up," said the Beast. "I am not your master. Do not flatter me, just be honest with me. Bring me your daughter as payment for the rose. If you do not bring her, I will find you and kill you."

The merchant was horrified by the thought of bringing Beauty to this Beast. He told the Beast that he only wanted to see his children once again, and then he would return alone to die for stealing the rose.

The Beast said, "I give you just one week."

When the merchant reached home, he gave Beauty the single red rose.



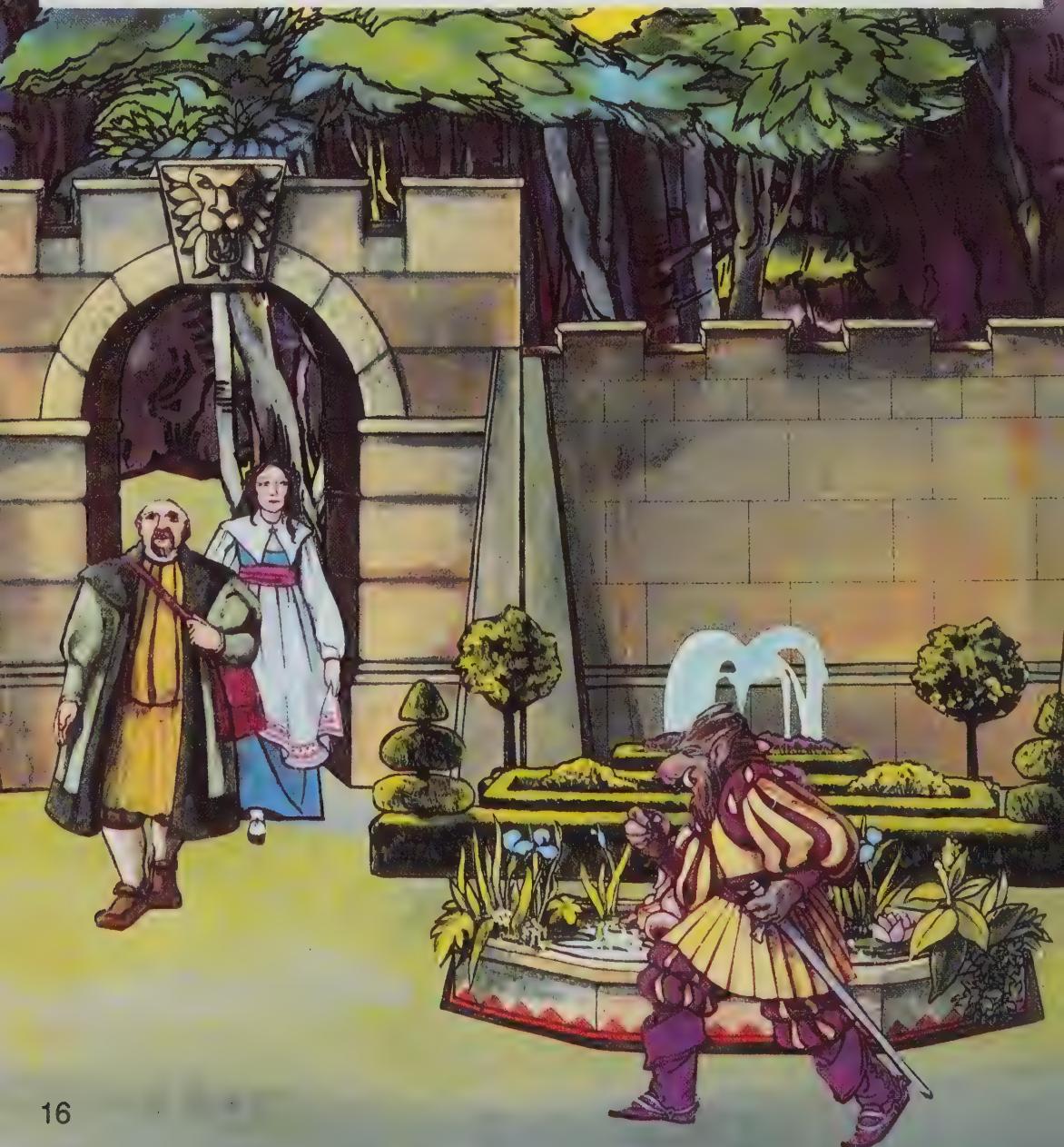
"Oh Beauty," he said sadly. "You don't know what this simple rose has cost me." Then he told his daughters the whole story. The two older girls scolded Beauty because she had asked for the rose.

Beauty said, "Have no fear, Father. I will not let you die because of me. I will go to the Beast."

The merchant refused to consider Beauty taking his place, but could not prevent her from following him as he returned to the Beast's palace.

The Beast greeted them in the courtyard. "I am happy to see you are true to your word," he growled at the merchant. Then to Beauty he said, "Young maiden, did you come of your own free will?"

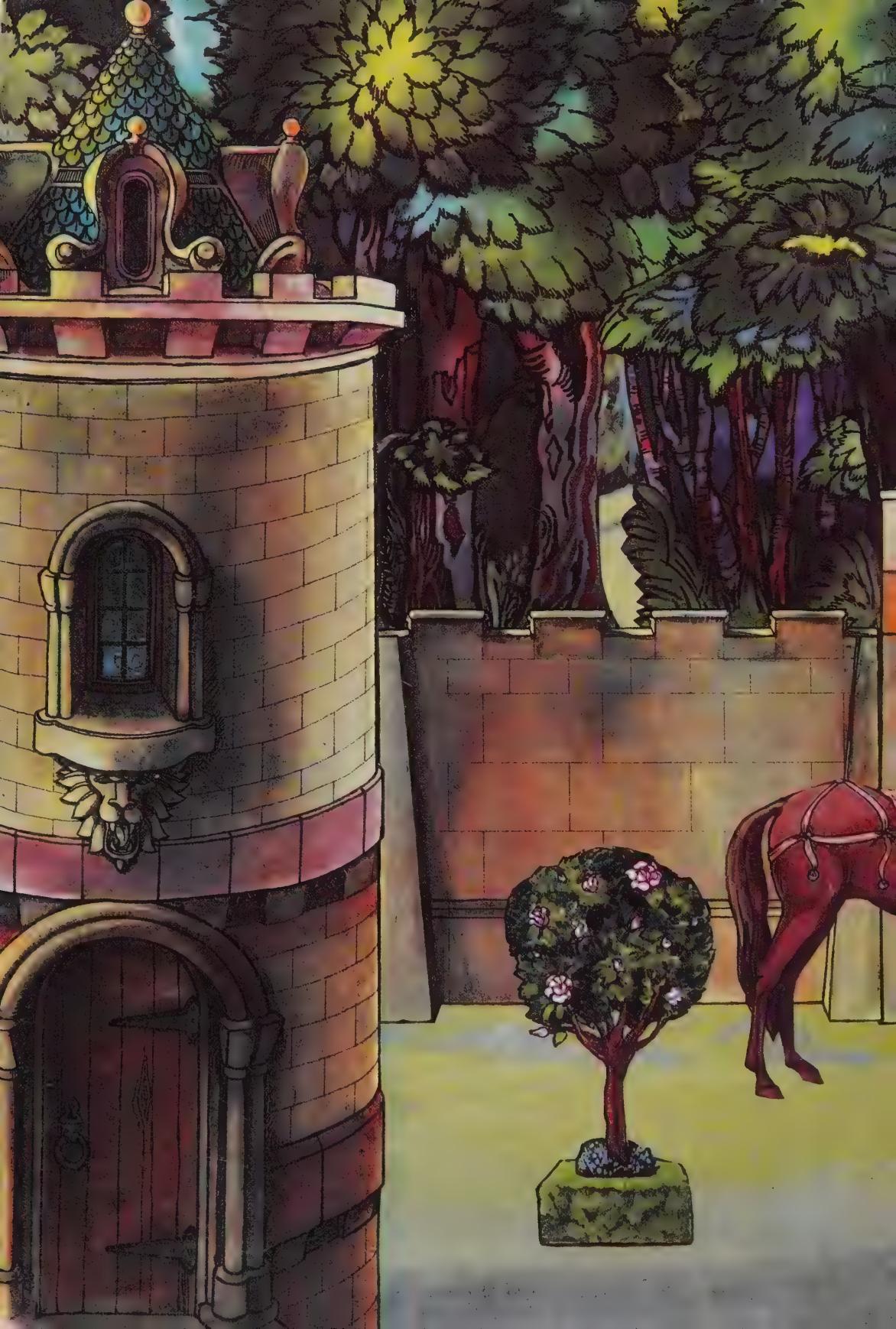
And trembling, Beauty replied, "Oh, yes, Beast. I came of my own free will."



As they sat down to dinner, the Beast said to the merchant, "You may spend the night, but in the morning you will leave. Beauty will stay here."

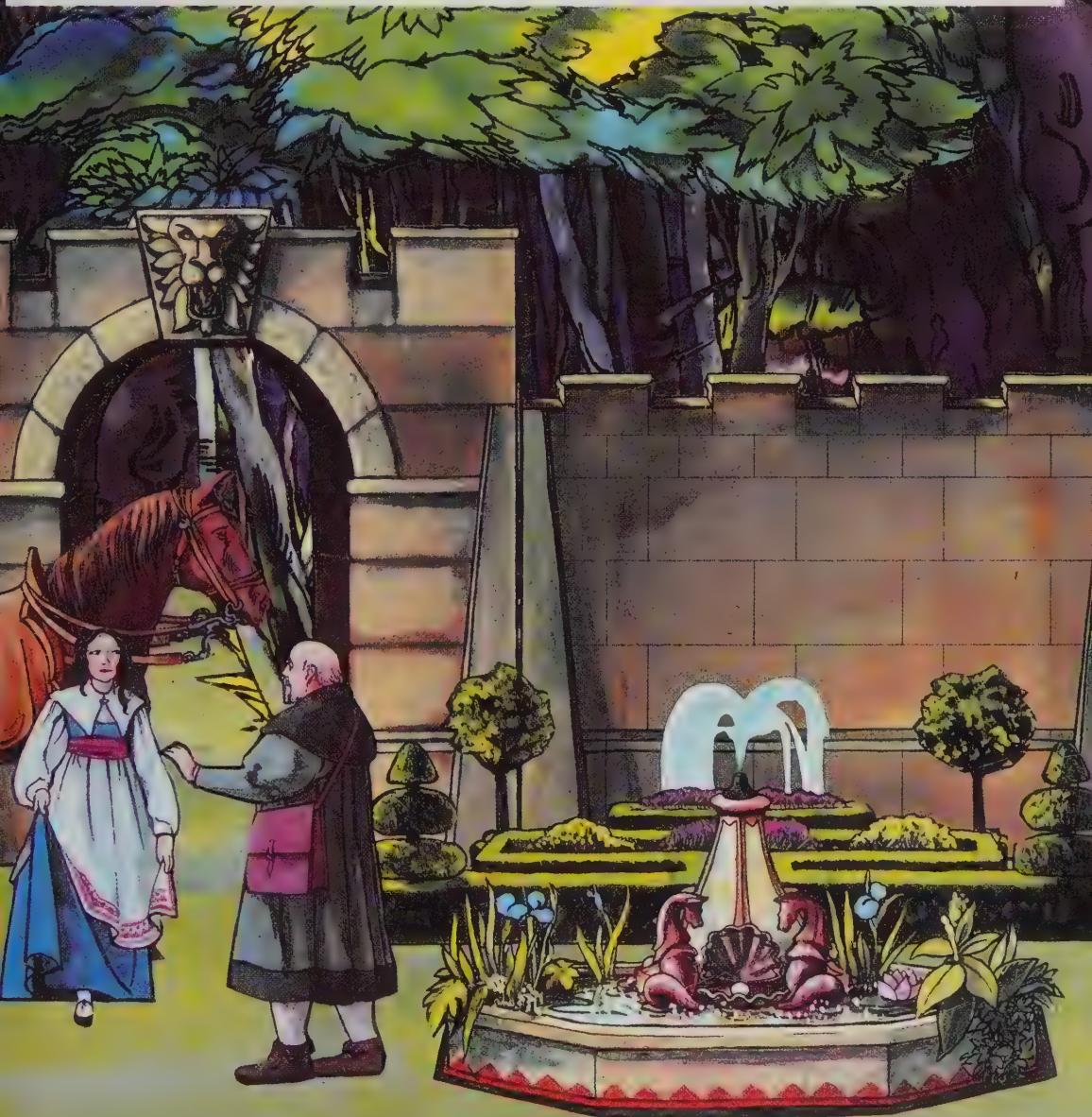
Although Beauty was frightened of the Beast, she felt a strange kind of sadness for him.





In the morning, the merchant cried, "Beauty, let me stay and you return home. I cannot bear to leave you!"

But Beauty comforted him and said, "Do not grieve for me, Father. I am doing as I wish." With a heavy heart, the merchant returned home.



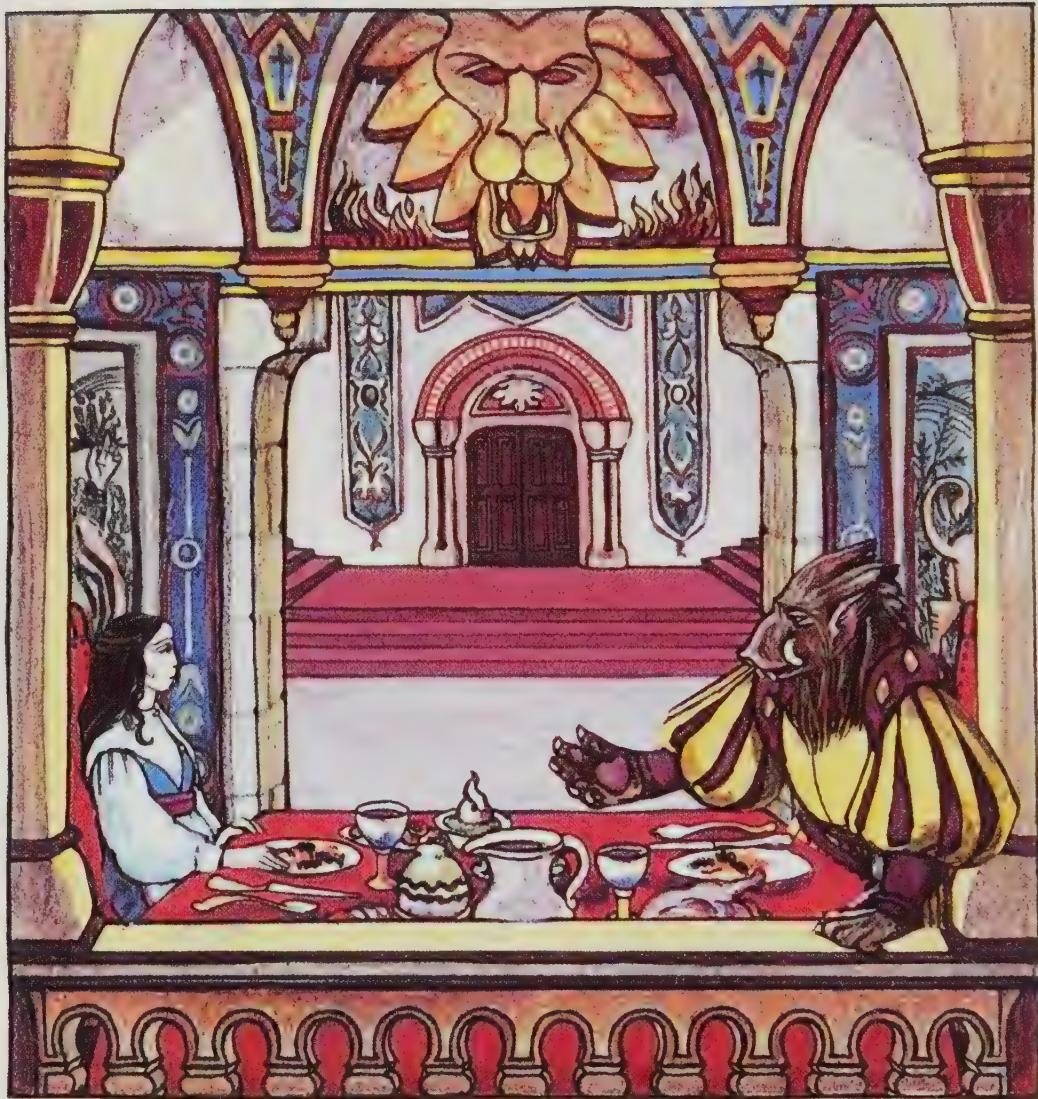


Beauty walked through the palace and found a room with a sign on the door that read, "Beauty's Room." She opened the door and found the most beautiful room she had ever seen. It had a grand piano and many books. She went in and opened one of the books. In it she read,

"Welcome, Beauty, do not fear,
No harm awaits you here.
Whatever you wish or demand,
Will be granted, by my command."

Upon reading this, Beauty recognized the kindness of the Beast. But still she longed to see her father. At that thought, she glanced at the mirror on the wall and saw her father returning home safely.





At dinner that evening, the Beast appeared. "Beauty, may I sit at dinner with you?"

Beauty was still a bit shaky when the Beast was near, but she said, "I would be honored if you would sit with me at dinner." The Beast was pleased with that.

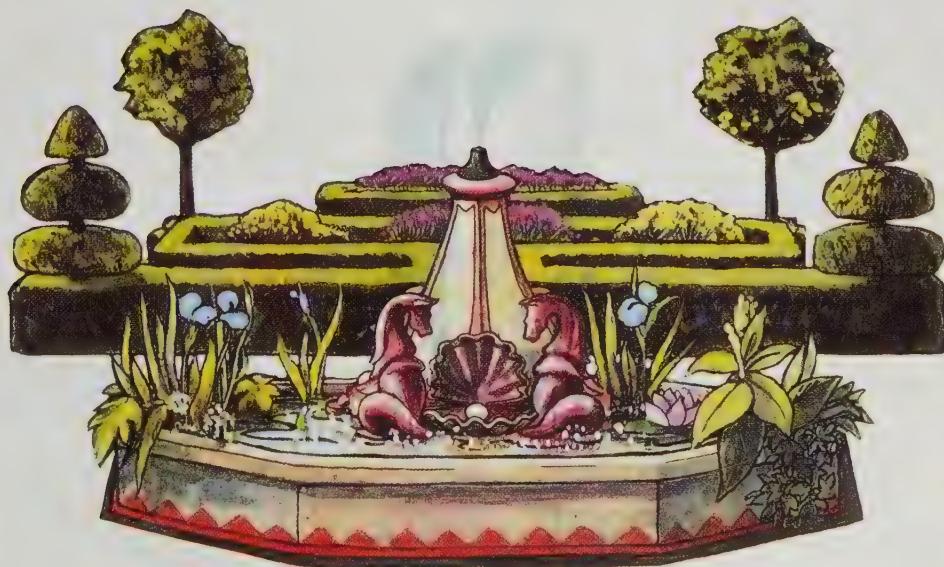
Then he asked Beauty, "Do you think I am ugly?"

Beauty could not lie. "Yes, Beast," she said, "But you are also kind and good, and that is far more important."

The Beast was touched by Beauty's words. "Beauty, will you marry me?"

"No, Beast," she said. "I will not marry you." The Beast sighed and left the room. Beauty now realized that the Beast would never harm her, and she felt pity for him.

Beauty lived in the palace for three months. Every night the Beast sat with her at dinner, and every night he asked her to marry him. Beauty always said "No."





One night she said, "Beast, I will not change my mind. Please do not ask me to marry you anymore."

The Beast replied, "Just promise me that you will live here forever and I will not ask again."

Beauty no longer thought of the Beast as a horrible monster, but loved him for his kindness, so she said, "Yes, I promise."

One day, Beauty thought of her father, and glancing at the mirror, saw that he was ill with worry about her. She ran to the Beast and begged to be allowed to visit her sick father.

The Beast said that he would miss her, but agreed that she could go home for a week. "You have only to wish tonight and you will wake up in your father's house. In a week, you can return here the same way. Remember your promise!"





The next morning, Beauty awoke in her father's house. When the merchant saw his daughter alive and well, he kissed her and cried for happiness. Beauty told him that she could only stay for one week.

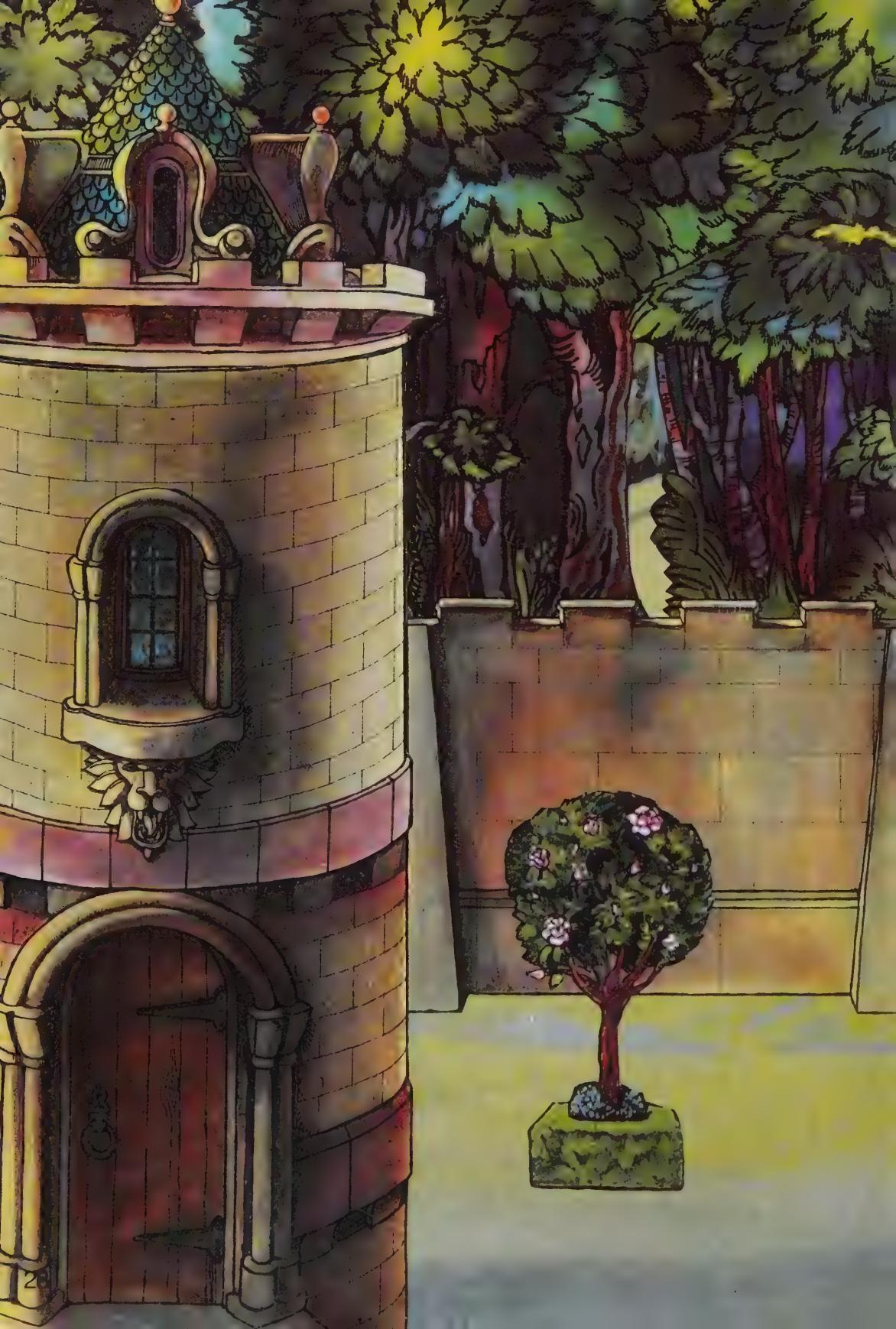
She looked more beautiful than ever in the lovely gown the Beast had given her, and this made her sisters jealous. Thinking that the Beast would be angry and would kill Beauty if she did not return, the sisters were nicer to her than they had been all their lives.

At the end of the week, the sisters cried at Beauty's leaving. Beauty did not want them to be sad, so she decided to stay longer.

Beauty was beginning to miss the Beast.

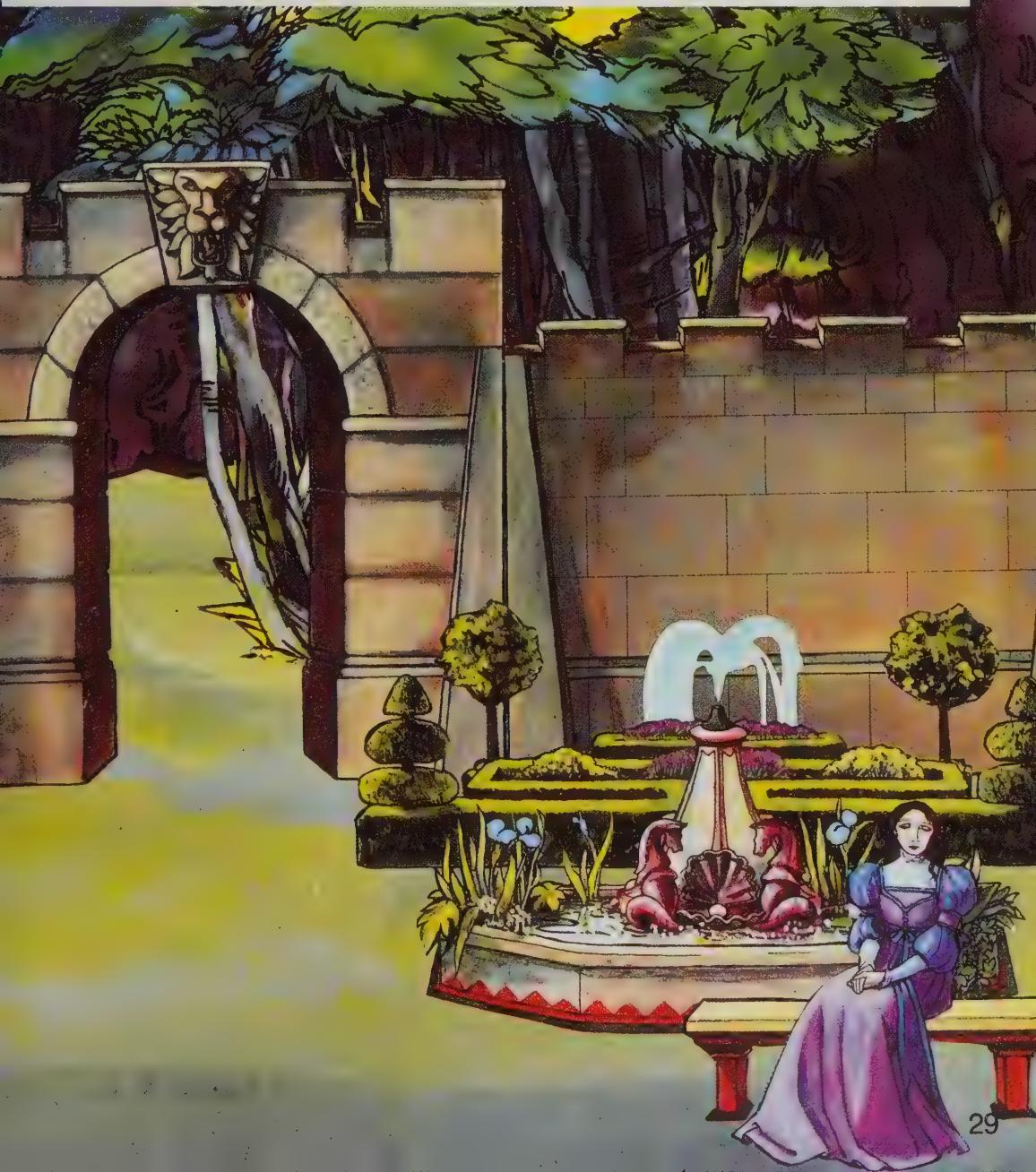
One night, Beauty dreamed she saw him lying in the courtyard. He was crying and moaning, and near death. She heard him say, "Beauty, how could you leave me? You said that you would come back in a week, and yet you did not. You promised me... You promised me..."





When she awoke, Beauty was horrified at the thought of the Beast dying because of her, and decided to return immediately.

When she woke up the following morning, Beauty was back in the Beast's palace, just as she had wished. She didn't realize how much she had missed him.





Remembering her dream, Beauty rushed to the courtyard. There she found the Beast lying on the ground. "Oh, Beast!" she called, fearing he was dead. When she reached him, she embraced him and he opened his eyes.

"I thought you were never coming back, so I decided to starve myself," he said. "I could not bear the thought of living without you. Now that you are here, I can die in peace."

"Beast, no!" said Beauty. "You must not die. Now I realize that, more than anything, I love you and want to be your wife!"

At that, the Beast suddenly changed from an ugly beast into a handsome prince. Beauty could not believe her eyes. She said to the prince, "What has happened to my Beast?"

The prince answered, "I am your Beast. When you said you loved me, you broke the evil spell I have been under. Only when a beautiful maiden could love me for myself and not for my appearance, would the spell be broken."



Suddenly, Beauty's father appeared in the palace. Beauty and the Beast were married, and lived happily ever after.



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ure Series

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